



# Wyoming Game and Fish Department

## Pinedale Region

## January 2017 Newsletter



A nice buck on winter range near LaBarge in early December.

### Mule Deer Counts

Every winter Wyoming Game and Fish biologists and wardens take to the air to conduct their annual deer population survey and classification. December is a good month for this as deer are typically congregated on their winter ranges, bucks still have their antlers and there is often snow cover making the animals more visible from the air.

After a couple of relatively mild winters, it appears we're going to get a real Wyoming winter this year and managers are concerned we may experience above average losses, especially with fawns. Managers are already seeing winter mortality, and it's early.

In the Sublette herd, managed by Pinedale Wildlife Biologist Dean Clause and Pinedale game wardens Jordan Kraft and Bubba Haley, a total of 10,000 deer were classified this year. Managers were hoping the number of fawns would increase, but it was 60 per 100 does, under the 10-year average of 67. However, the number of bucks remained strong at 41 per 100 does.

In the Wyoming Range deer herd, Big Piney Game Warden Adam Hymas and South Jackson Wildlife Biologist Gary Fralick conducted classifications for the northern portions of the Wyoming Range with overall ratios similar to last year. Buck ratios

were again a bright spot this year at 36 per 100 does. Unfortunately, the fawn ratios were just 58 per 100 does, the lowest number seen since 1993, and many of those may succumb to winter.

Managers presented the results of their annual mule deer counts, habitat projects and current research at a series of mule deer public meetings held in Pinedale, Jackson and Afton during the second week of January. All the big game survey results, and proposed seasons for 2017, will be presented at public meetings scheduled for later in March.

*(Right) Examples of mule deer losses already being seen this winter. Local wildlife managers are concerned there may be above average winter losses this year.*







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### Early Winter

With an early onset of winter this year, all of the Pinedale Region game wardens have been responding to calls of elk in conflict situations on private land. South Pinedale Game warden Jordan Kraft has enlisted help from several local Game and Fish personnel to try and move elk to feedgrounds along the southern Wind River Range front.

North Pinedale Game Warden Bubba Haley has been monitoring elk distribution around Soda Lake and Black Butte feed grounds. Warden Haley responded to complaints of elk damage near 40 Rod Road and the New Fork River where a handful of bull elk have been moving around hitting numerous haystacks.

Approximately 200 elk showed up in Willow Creek in early December, but because of improved access for late season cow elk hunters, those elk left and went to Soda Lake. A handful of elk stayed, but were displaced by hunters.

Warden Haley has also responded to several complaints about elk damaging stored hay in the Bondurant area. Hazing and hunting have had limited success due to the deep snow. Warden Haley noted that most hunters were not equipped to deal with the winter conditions in Bondurant.



*A combination of snowmobiles on the ground and a helicopter in the air were used to move 100 head of elk from private lands to the Muddy Creek feedground south of Boulder recently.*



*Treyton Deeds, 12, and sister Maddie Deeds, 14, from Pinedale, each killed a cow elk on the Willow Creek Ranch. Ranch manager, Cody Sturman, helped load them with his tractor.*

### On the Ground

The Pinedale Habitat & Access crew for the Game and Fish Department completed a livestock exclosure project at Onion Springs off the Ryegrass Road near Daniel. The fence was built with old recycled drill pipe. Such drill pipe has been donated by companies including Chevron, Ultra and QEP, and is being utilized for a number of Game & Fish fencing projects in the region.





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South Pinedale Game Warden Jordan Kraft watches a group of mule deer on winter range south of Pinedale.

## Winter Range Patrol

North Pinedale Game Warden Bubba Haley coordinated the annual mule deer winter range task force. Game wardens from other parts of the state rotate in to help patrol the extensive mule deer winter ranges around Pinedale, Big Piney and LaBarge. Even with the increased law enforcement presence, wardens still rely heavily on reports of suspicious activities from the public.

"We end our hunting seasons when we do to protect these animals during the winter months when they are so vulnerable," said Game and Fish Regional Supervisor John Lund. "These deer face many challenges, and blatant illegal shooting is especially disturbing."

Game wardens continue to focus their attention on these mule deer winter ranges, but they still need help. "We do not have the personnel to be everywhere, all the time, so we rely on reports from the public," said Lund. "There are quite a few people out there watching the deer and their reports of suspicious activity can be extremely helpful. Whether you're a hunter or just a wildlife enthusiast, the illegal shooting of these animals should not be tolerated by anyone." Managers are aware of one deer being illegally shot this winter near Buckskin Crossing south of Boulder.

Anyone with information on a possible poaching incident should call the STOP POACHING hotline at 1-877-WGFD-TIP (1-877-943-3847), any

Game and Fish regional office, or any Game and Fish warden. Information can also be reported by clicking on the "Stop Poaching" icon located on the Wyoming Game and Fish Department's web site homepage at <https://wgfd.wyo.gov/web2011/home.aspx>. Any information leading to an arrest and conviction may result in a cash reward and anyone providing information may remain anonymous.



A "Stop Poaching" call reported this dead mule deer fawn. What at first looked like a poaching incident was later determined to be an eagle kill.



Warden Kraft reviews photos taken by a mule deer enthusiast south of Boulder.







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## Stop Poaching Call Rewarded

Breanne Cowan of Farson is shown here (Right) receiving a \$1,000 check from South Pinedale Game Warden Jordan Kraft and the Wyoming Game and Fish Department's Stop Poaching program for helping in the apprehension of two violators for hunting deer in the wrong area, taking the wrong sex animal and wasting a buck deer earlier this fall.

Warden Kraft received the tip from Breanne about a yearling buck deer that had been shot and left in Farson. A quick investigation identified two California suspects who were hunting doe mule deer on several ranches in the Farson area. One suspect had already left the state after the poaching incident, but the other suspect was located and interviewed.

When confronted with the evidence, the man readily admitted to accidentally shooting a yearling buck mule deer on a doe/fawn license. The suspect stated they were both troubled by the situation and decided to hide and abandon the deer instead of caring for the meat or notifying a game warden.

It's likely the suspects fled from the area after the incident because the man had shot the deer from a country road and in a wrong hunt area. Each had already harvested a deer in the wrong area. Both men were intention-

ally hunting in a wrong area after they were unsuccessful with their first choice hunt area. Further investigation revealed one suspect had also harvested an antelope on his wife's license and the man eventually admitted that his wife never even came to the state and does not hunt.

One suspect was charged in Sweetwater County with two counts of taking a deer in the wrong area, failure to wear fluorescent orange clothing, shooting a deer from a public roadway, taking the wrong gender of deer and waste/abandonment of big game. The man was fined nearly \$600, ordered to pay \$4,000 restitution for the deer, lost his hunting privileges for three years and was sentenced to two years of suspended jail time while placed on probation. The same man was also charged for the illegal antelope out of Uinta County and was fined over \$1,200 and lost his hunting privileges for five years on those offenses. The other suspect was interviewed in California and charged with taking a deer in the wrong area and for aiding in the abandonment and waste of a deer. The man was fined nearly \$700. Two harvested deer and one harvested antelope were seized from the men and the meat was donated to families in need.







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## From the Front Desk...

Pinedale Game and Fish Office Managers Lori Johnson and Kristen Draney enjoyed watching this mature bull moose feeding on the trees in the parking lot in late December. Johnson says “We want to remind folks

that with the snow and cold temperatures, our wildlife tend to show up in residential areas. It's a tough time for elk, deer and moose and residential trees and shrubs are an easy food source to help them through the winter. We've had numerous calls of injured elk and deer this month. Please slow down, give wildlife a brake, and give them space! Keep pets under control and try to be tolerant of deer, elk and moose this frigid winter season. If problems develop, don't hesitate to call the office at 367-4353. We'll make every effort to remedy the situation to the benefit of residents and wildlife alike.”



## ***New Bank for the New Fork***

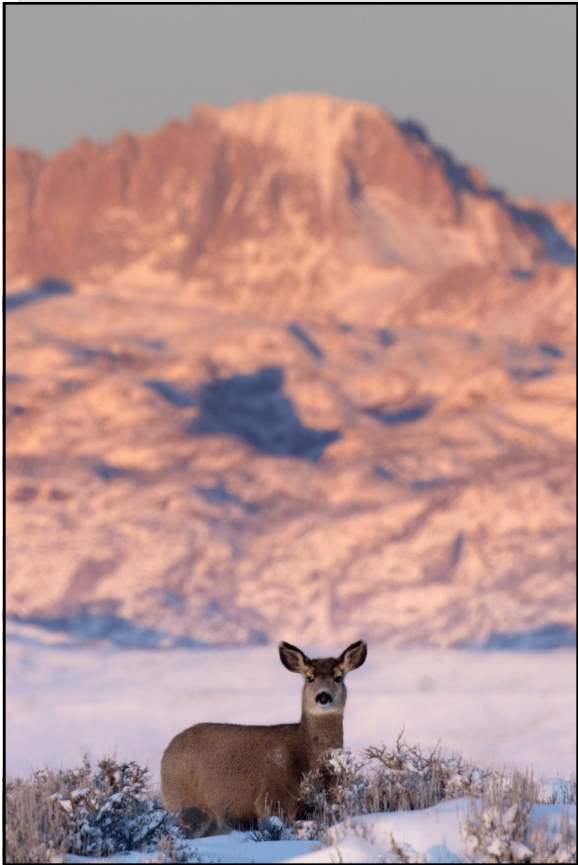
Pinedale Fish Biologist Darren Rhea completed oversight of the New Fork bank stabilization project located on the Sullivan property near Boulder. The project will improve water quality for this trophy fishery.



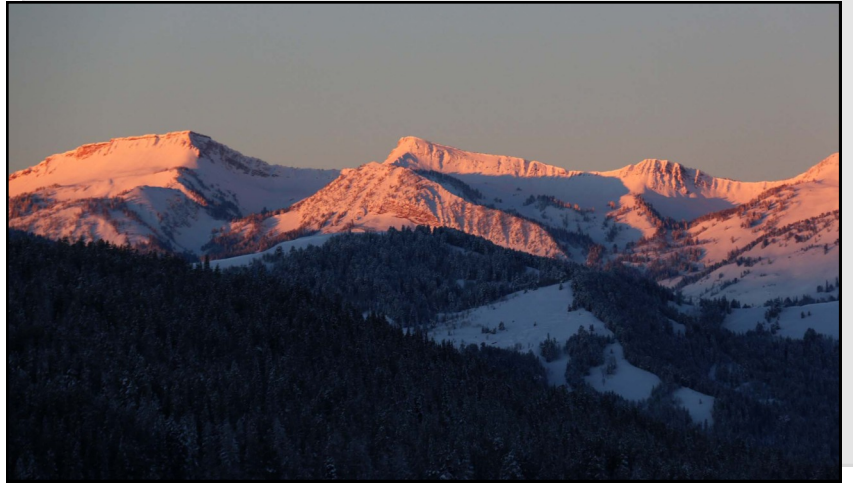
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## Photo Page...



*A doe mule deer pauses for a look beneath Fremont Peak. Photos by Mark Gocke, WGFD*



*First light on the Wyoming Range.*



*Snow piles high on a buckrail fence near Bondurant.*



*Avalley fog settles over Forty Rod Creek near the Daniel Hatchery at sunset.*